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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 11 TOKYO 000429

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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 02/19/08

INDEX:

- (1) Aegis collision with fishing boat might adversely affect costly MD system (Tokyo Shimbun)
- (2) Government being pursued for its response to Aegis ship accident (Mainichi)
- (3) Government criticized by ruling and opposition camps for response to Aegis ship accident (Mainichi)
- (4) Japan, U.S. to begin jointly developing portable chemical weapons detector within this month (Nikkei)
- (5) DPJ, PNP agree to draft proposal revising SOFA (Nikkei)
- (6) Okinawa Prefectural Police did not publicize sexual assault by U.S. soldier in off-base house last year; Another rape case at Camp Schwab in 2003 (Ryukyu Shimpo)
- (7) Suspect outside reach of preventive measures (Ryukyu Shimpo)
- (8) Government presents no drastic preventive measures, following schoolgirl rape incident by U.S. Marine; Futenma relocation plan may be affected (Mainichi)
- (9) Abe attends conservative policy study council meeting (Nikkei)
- (10) Cooperation to check China bogs down with strategic dialogue

among Japan, U.S. and Australia fizzling out: New administration in Japan, Australia cautious about initiative (Nikkei)

(11) Poll on Fukuda cabinet, political parties, gas tax (Yomiuri)

(12) Poll on Fukuda cabinet, political parties (Nikkei)

(13) TOP HEADLINES

(14) EDITORIALS

(15) Prime Minister's schedule, February 16 (Nikkei)

ARTICLES:

(1) Aegis collision with fishing boat might adversely affect costly MD system

TOKYO SHIMBUN NET

11:32, February 19, 2008

Kyodo

A state-of-the-art Aegis vessel collided with a fishing boat earlier today. Equipped with abilities to detect and track missiles headed for Japan, the destroyer, which is supposed to play a core role in a missile defense (MD) system, caused an accident involving a private boat in Japanese waters.

Concern has already emerged in the Ministry of Defense about the accident's possible spillover effects on the MD program. A MOD official said: "People might say, 'Is there any need to spend an enormous amount of money to deploy the system when (the SDF) cannot

TOKYO 00000429 002 OF 011

protect Japanese citizens?"

In Greek mythology, "Aegis" means the "shield" Zeus gave to his daughter. Highly advanced, Aegis radar can track over 100 targets at the same time and automatically select and intercept incoming missiles and artillery shells. Capable of exchanging information instantaneously with U.S. Aegis vessels via a data link system, Japanese Aegis vessels have been called a symbol of the Japan-U.S. alliance.

(2) Government being pursued for its response to Aegis ship accident

MAINICHI ONLINE (Excerpts)

February 19, 2008

The government today has been under the gun for its information gathering since early this morning and response to the accident involving the Aegis destroyer Atago and a commercial fishing boat. The ruling and opposition camps have both been critical of the government's slowness in getting started, such as Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba being contacted an hour and a half after the accident. Although the cause of the accident is unclear, the mishap is being taken as a serious incident, following the series of ministry blunders, such as the scandal involving former Vice Minister Moriya and the issue of intelligence leaks on the Aegis' functions.

"Yes, it is so. This is terrible," said Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda briefly about the accident to the press corps as he hurriedly got into his car. He was already 15 minutes behind schedule. The car sped off to the Diet. He held an emergency cabinet meeting from 8:00 AM. A Maritime Self-Defense officer, sea chart in hand, entered the cabinet meeting room and gave a briefing.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura rushed into the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) at 0712 AM. He received a briefing on the accident and search activities from staffers of the intelligence-liaison office attached to the Kantei's Crisis Management Center.

The regular press conference started at 0910 AM, thirty minutes behind schedule. When it was pointed out to Machimura that the first reports about the accident seemed to have been late, he replied with a stiff face, "My guess is that full attention was first paid to hurriedly taking rescue measures." Asked about the cause of the accident, he repeatedly said, "I don't know."

Meeting the press at the Defense Ministry, Defense Minister Ishiba was visibly angry that he was not informed about the accident until an hour and a half after it happened.

(3) Government criticized by ruling and opposition camps for response to Aegis ship accident

MAINICHI ONLINE (Excerpts)
13:34 PM, February 19, 2008

Critical voices have erupted one after the other from the ruling and opposition parties regarding the government's initial response to the accident between an Aegis destroyer and a small fishing boat. The government's accountability is being raised.

TOKYO 00000429 003 OF 011

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) called in a senior Defense Ministry official to a general meeting held in the Diet. The official briefed them on the details of the accident and the current state of affairs, but he was showered with criticism at the fact that it took an hour and a half after the accident for a report of it to reach Defense Minister Ishiba.

After the meeting, General Council Chairman Nikai met the press and told them with a stern face: "The government must respond promptly. The party will be expressing a severe view."

On the other hand, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Hatoyama, speaking to the press at party headquarters, harshly criticized the government: "I would like the Maritime Self Defense Force to seriously reconsider its response. Their nature itself lacks any sense of tension, even though there have been a series of accidents and incidents. It seems that it took one or two hours to even contact the Defense Minister, so there is no heartfelt sense of the defense of Japan. The problem is that the entire bureaucracy is too lax."

(4) Japan, U.S. to begin jointly developing portable chemical weapons detector within this month

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
Evening, January 16, 2008

The governments of Japan and the United States are set to launch later this month a joint project to develop a portable chemical agent detector to deal with terrorism and attacks involving chemical weapons. It will combine America's detection technology and know-how and Japan's electronic technology. The two countries need a mobile and high-precision detector because an initial response to a chemical attack is crucial.

The envisioned detector will be the size of a calculator that can be carried in one hand. It must be able to automatically detect gaseous chemical agents and identify their types. The highly accurate detector that can also shorten the identification time will allow the speedy removal of a contaminant source on the spot.

Currently in the United States, chemical agents are visually determined by changes in colors of test papers that are dipped into chemical agents by hand. The new detector will be able to instantly identify changes in colors and the types of chemical agents, such as sarin and nerve gases, using a spectrograph and a digital camera developed by Japan. The device will make it easier to detect chemical agents even during nighttime when identifying changes in colors by the naked eye is difficult.

The two governments will shortly sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Japan is expected to allocate some 248 million yen in

research fund for fiscal 2007-2009. The government plans to equip the Ground Self-Defense Force 101st Special Weaponry Defense Corps and other units with chemical agent detectors to deal with nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

(5) DPJ, PNP agree to draft proposal revising SOFA

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
February 16, 2008

TOKYO 00000429 004 OF 011

Deputy President of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) Naoto Kan and Deputy President of the People's New Party (PNP) yesterday held talks in the Diet. In the wake of the rape incident involving a junior high school girl in Okinawa, they agreed that the two parties would draft a proposal revising the Japan-U.S. Status-of-Forces Agreement (SOFA) that stipulates the legal status of the U.S. forces in Japan. They plan to call for cooperation from the Social Democratic Party.

(6) Okinawa Prefectural Police did not publicize sexual assault by U.S. soldier in off-base house last year; Another rape case at Camp Schwab in 2003

RYUKYU SHINPO (Page 1) (Full)
February 16, 2008

In January 2007, Okinawa Prefectural Police apprehended a master sergeant, 27 at that time, on suspicion of raping an 18-year-old foreign woman at his house in Chatan-cho. In April 2003, Nago Police Station also apprehended a U.S. Marine Corps sergeant, 29, and a lance corporal, 20, on suspicion of raping a 19-year-old foreign woman at Camp Schwab.

The prefectural police did not disclose these incidents out of consideration to the victims. These two cases were dropped in the end, but the cases are on the police's statistical record of rape incidents involving U.S. military personnel.

The incident in 2007 was caused by a U.S. serviceman living in an off-base house, as is in the latest case involving a junior high school student. According to investigators, the master sergeant took the woman, with whom he had become acquainted on the Internet, into his home and raped her. She was bodily injured.

A senior prefectural police officer said: "No victims want their cases to be publicized, not limited to victims in cases involving U.S. military personnel. Particularly in sexual assaults, it is impossible to establish a case without cooperation from the victims, so some cases are not made public, with consideration given to the victims' feelings."

According to the statistics that the Okinawa Prefectural Police has collected since a 12-year-old girl was raped by three U.S. servicemen in 1995, 14 sexual assaults by U.S. military personnel occurred, including failed attempts. In these cases, 17 were prosecuted, and most of them occurred in the central part on the prefecture, with three cases in Chatan-cho; two in Okinawa City; one in Uruma City; two in the northern part; two in Camp Kadena; two in Camp Zukeran; one in Camp Futenma; and one in Camp Schwab.

(7) Suspect outside reach of preventive measures

RYUKYU SHINPO (Page 1) (Full)
February 16, 2008

Representatives from the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly, including U.S. Military Base Special Committee Chairman Seiichi Oyakawa, visited the Foreign Ministry's Okinawa Office and the Okinawa Defense Bureau on the afternoon of Feb. 15 and filed a protest against the recent rape of a schoolgirl by a U.S. Marine. Defense Bureau Director General Rou Manabe explained that the suspect had

TOKYO 00000429 005 OF 011

not been covered by the measures being taken by the U.S. military to prevent a recurrence of similar incidents, saying: "It probably was a blind spot, but the suspect was not covered by the countermeasures." He indicated that the current preventive measures were insufficient.

According to the Foreign Ministry, the U.S. military has given lecture classes on the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement and Okinawan culture to newly assigned personnel. The U.S. military has also taken preventive measures, such as a system to ban Marines ranked below the status of staff sergeant from going out midnight. The Marine who was arrested in the schoolgirl rape case was a staff sergeant.

Foreign Ministry Okinawa Office Deputy Head Akira Kuramitsu stated: "We have taken preventive measures, based on the view that young, single soldiers tend to cause incidents or accidents. Focusing on the fact that incidents are being caused by those outside the reach of the measures, the U.S. military is also mapping out countermeasures."

(8) Government presents no drastic preventive measures, following schoolgirl rape incident by U.S. Marine; Futenma relocation plan may be affected

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)
February 19, 2008

Only one week after the alleged rape of a junior high school student by a U.S. Marine in Okinawa, another Marine Corps member was arrested on suspicion of breaking into a house. The government has been hard pressed to deal with protests to the U.S. and requests from the Okinawa Prefectural Government. The Foreign Ministry is aiming to come up with a package of preventive measures by the end of the week, but the prefectural government has been angrily questioning what official discipline actually is.

Kin Town Assembly Head Tsuyoshi Gibu, vice chairman of the prefecture's council on converting base sites and resolving base problems, visited the Foreign Ministry yesterday afternoon and told reporters: "The Marines have learned nothing. The (Japan-U.S.) Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) stands as an obstacle."

Vice Governor Katsuko Asato asked the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Ministry to implement the plan transfer of the Marine Corps in Okinawa to Guam as part of the realignment of U.S. military force, reduce U.S. troops in Okinawa, and drastically review SOFA. In response to these request, Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba said: "I want to make the SOFA more effective," but he stopped short of mentioning a review of SOFA. Gibu expressed his content, grumbling: "His stance will merely increase anger among the residents."

Foreign Ministry Administrative Vice Minister Mitoji Yabunaka, on behalf of Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura, issued a protest to U.S. Ambassador Thomas Schieffer on the phone. In a press conference, Yabunaka also stressed his determination to promptly work out preventive measures.

Some have begun to worry that the series of incidents by U.S. servicemen may affect the plan to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan). A senior prefectural government officer said: "The incidents and the relocation plan are separate

TOKYO 00000429 006 OF 011

matters," but Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura said in a press conference: "It is necessary to ascertain whether there will be some effect."

(9) Abe attends conservative policy study council meeting

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 19, 2008

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on Feb. 15 for the first time attended a meeting of the Real

Conservative Policy Study Council chaired by Shoichi Nakagawa of the LDP. Since many members of the council are distancing themselves from the Fukuda administration, Abe's participation in it will likely create speculation. The topic of the meeting was a bill to protect human rights, which their parties have begun considering submitting to the Diet. The meeting brought together 28 lawmakers. Nakagawa criticized the bill, noting, "It has the image of being the Maintenance of Public Order Law. I cannot accept its contents."

(10) Cooperation to check China bogs down with strategic dialogue among Japan, U.S. and Australia fizzling out: New administration in Japan, Australia cautious about initiative

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 16, 2008

The pattern of cooperation among Japan, the U.S., Australia and India to deal with the rise of China has begun to change. The four countries had strengthened ties, as can be seen in the fact that they created a framework for a strategic dialogue among them. However, the cooperative mood has rapidly dropped off this year. That is because the countries now want to avoid irritating China. The dialogue will likely diet out.

The Rudd administration of Australia was inaugurated in December last year with strengthening ties with China as a slogan. Foreign Minister Smith's statement during a press conference held in Canberra jointly with his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi created a stir in Japan.

Smith told reporters, "The strategic dialogue among Japan, the U.S., Australia and India last year raised concerns in China. Australia has no intention of proposing such a framework." He also said that he conveyed this decision to Japan as well.

The Rudd administration, which advocates strengthening relations with China, does not want to irritate China. Smith, who came to Japan for the first time on Jan. 31, also hinted at his government's intention to attach importance to China, saying, "Strengthened Japan-China relations are also good to Australia."

Former Prime Minister Abe while in office proposed cooperation among Japan, the U.S., Australia and India. The first four-nation bureau director-level dialogue took place in the spring last year. The four countries have achieved concrete track records, including the holding of a joint maritime drill in the Bay of Bengal in Sept. 2007, joined also by Singapore.

Abe proposed the four-nation cooperation with the aim of deepening ties of democratic nations in the Asia-Pacific region in readiness for the rise of China, according to a person close to him. Another

TOKYO 00000429 007 OF 011

objective was to check China's military buildup by strengthening security cooperation with Australia and India, centered on the Japan-U.S. alliance. Though some among government officials were reportedly cautious about the idea, the U.S. went along with the proposal, and Australia and India also joined.

However, the tide has begun turning since Abe stepped down in September last year. One government source said, "To be honest, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, who attaches importance to China diplomacy, is not so disposed to the four-nation dialogue." However, he found it difficult to show a negative stance toward an idea proposed by Japan.

The Rudd administration's statement on its intention to pull out of the dialogue was convenient for Fukuda. The situation is the same for the U.S. The Bush administration is increasingly becoming cautious about the four-nation dialogue, which could unnecessarily stimulate China, according to a Japan-U.S. diplomatic source.

Japan, on its part, will continue a strategic dialogue among Japan, the U.S. and Australia, while working on India to strengthen bilateral relations. Fukuda on the 15th talked with Prime Minister Singh on the phone. Can Japan create a strategy toward China

replacing the cooperation among Japan, the U.S., Australia and India? The Fukuda administration will be urged to come up with a new initiative to deal with rising China.

(11) Poll on Fukuda cabinet, political parties, gas tax

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
February 19, 2008

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote the results of a survey taken in January.)

Q: Do you support the Fukuda cabinet?

Yes 38.7 (45.6)
No 50.8 (41.6)
Other answers (O/A) 2.8 (3.5)
No answer (N/A) 7.7 (9.3)

Q: Which political party do you support now? Pick only one.

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 32.6 (35.5)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 20.0 (16.9)
New Komeito (NK) 3.2 (2.2)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 2.1 (2.3)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 0.9 (1.0)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0.1 (0.2)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0.1 (---)
Other political parties --- (---)
None 40.4 (40.7)
N/A 0.8 (1.3)

Q: What's your impression of Prime Minister Fukuda in the following four areas? Pick one that is closer to yours.

He displays leadership on his cabinet and ruling party 24.9
He doesn't display leadership on his cabinet and ruling party 68.6
His faith and standpoint are clear-cut 24.0

TOKYO 00000429 008 OF 011

His faith and standpoint are not clear-cut 69.5
He fully accounts for his policies 13.7
He doesn't fully account for his policies 80.0
He is clearly committed to reform 18.1
He isn't clearly committed to reform 74.9
N/A 4.4

Q: Do you think the Fukuda cabinet has been appropriately dealing with recent changes in the economic situation?

Yes 19.3
No 74.9
N/A 5.8

Q: Do you think it would be better to continue the current provisional rate of taxation on gasoline for roads after the Special Taxation Measures Law expires at the end of March?

Yes 29.4
No 62.1
N/A 8.5

Q: The ruling and opposition parties have agreed to hold thoroughgoing deliberations and reach a conclusion by the end of March on legislation to continue the current provisional rate of taxation on gasoline. However, the ruling coalition says it will take a vote by the end of March while the opposition parties say they have not promised to take a vote. Do you think it would be better to take a vote on this legislation by the end of March?

Yes 45.2
No 45.2
N/A 9.7

Q: The ruling coalition is going to pass a provisional gasoline tax

bill while the opposition camp is opposed to that. Do you think the ruling and opposition parties should compromise and agree to revise the bill?

Yes 60.4
No 30.3
N/A 9.3

Q: Do you appreciate the DPJ's response in the current Diet session?

Appreciate very much 5.2
Appreciate somewhat 35.9
Don't appreciate very much 38.2
Don't appreciate at all 14.9
N/A 5.7

Q: What kind of government would you like to see now? Pick only one.

The current LDP-NK coalition government 22.0
A DPJ-led coalition government of opposition parties 17.5
The LDP's single-party government 6.7
The DPJ's single-party government 5.2
A coalition government centering on the LDP and the DPJ 19.0
A government under a new framework of political parties after realigning the ruling and opposition parties 17.2

TOKYO 00000429 009 OF 011

O/A 0.1
N/A 12.2

Polling methodology
Date of survey: Feb. 16-17.
Subjects of survey: 3,000 persons chosen from among all eligible voters throughout the country (at 250 locations on a stratified two-stage random sampling basis).
Method of implementation: Door-to-door visits for face-to-face interviews.
Number of valid respondents: 1,734 persons (57.8 PERCENT).

(12) Poll on Fukuda cabinet, political parties

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 18, 2008

Questions & Answers
(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote findings from the last survey conducted in January.)

Q: Do you support the Fukuda cabinet?

Yes 40 (42)
No 48 (46)
Can't say (C/S) + don't know (D/K) 12 (12)

Q: Which political party do you support or like now?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 39 (36)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 31 (30)
New Komeito (NK) 4 (4)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 3 (3)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1 (3)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 1 (0)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0 (0)
Other political parties 0 (1)
None 16 (16)
C/S+D/K 5 (6)

(Note) The total percentage does not become 100 PERCENT in some cases due to rounding.

Polling methodology: The survey was taken on Feb. 15-17 by Nikkei Research Inc. over the telephone on a random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, samples were chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over across the nation. A total of 1,530 households with

one or more eligible voters were sampled, and answers were obtained from 919 persons (60.1 PERCENT).

(13) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi:

Government plan allows construction of 1,850 km stretch of highway without advisory panel scrutiny

Mainichi:

December fire on destroyer Shirane caused by overheated beverage heater brought on by crewman without authorization

Yomiuri:

110 national treasure buildings, monuments face risk of destruction

TOKYO 00000429 010 OF 011

if Kyoto, Nara are hit by major quakes

Nikkei:

METI eyes 2 trillion yen trade insurance quota for projects to fight global warming

Sankei:

Education Ministry to launch experts' council to study need for moral education

Tokyo Shimbun:

Toshima Ward to introduce system to closely scrutinize care insurance program

Akahata:

JCP proposes budgets oriented toward household finances

(14) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

- (1) Road debate: Ground for 59 trillion yen collapses
- (2) Kosovo's independence a first step toward stability

Mainichi:

- (1) Kosovo declares independence: Caution urged to avoid ethnic clash
- (2) Time to craft roadmap for closing down Shinginko Tokyo

Yomiuri:

- (1) Hasty debate on telecommunications laws would leave problems in future
- (2) Preserve stability on Balkan Peninsula

Nikkei:

- (1) Kosovo's independence must bring down curtain to Balkan tragedy
- (2) School guidelines too stringent

Sankei:

- (1) JAL jet rear-ended another plane
- (2) Kosovo avows independence: Persuasion and dialogue essential to ward off conflict

Tokyo Shimbun:

- (1) Next-generation DVDs: Consumers must come first
- (2) Kosovo's independence: EU bears heavy responsibilities

Akahata:

- (1) Deployment of nuclear-powered aircraft carrier: Decision must be made by Yokosuka citizens

(15) Prime Minister's schedule, February 16

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 17, 2008

Stayed at Kantei residence all day.

Prime Minister's schedule, February 17

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 18, 2008

TOKYO 00000429 011 OF 011

10:02 Arrived at his private residence at Nozawa.
15:25 Met with Prime Ministerial Advisor Ito at Kantei residence.
16:53 Met with State Minister in Charge of Economic and Fiscal
Policy Ota.

Prime Minister's schedule, February 17

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 19, 2008

09:47 Met at Kantei with Vice Health Minister Erikawa, Social
Insurance Agency Director-General Sakano, and MIC Administrative
Evaluation Bureau Director-General Seki. After them, met with former
Financial Services Minister Yamamoto.
11:12 Met with LDP Administrative Reform Promotion Headquarters
chief Chuma and others.
12:13 Attended a liaison meeting of the government and the ruling
bloc. After that, met with Secretary General Ibuki and afterwards,
met with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Futahashi.
13:26 Met with House of Representatives member Seishiro Eto and
later, met with Ito.
14:37 Met with State Minister in Charge of Science and Technology
Policy Kishida, Deputy Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary Saka.
Afterwards, Met with Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura.
15:30 Met with Administrative Vice Land Minister Minehisa.
16:58 Attended an LDP executives meeting in the Diet.
17:30 Attended a session of the Central Natural Disaster Prevention
Council.
18:58 Dined with Defense Minister Ishiba, Health Minister Masuzoe,
Education Minister Tokai and others at the Japanese restaurant
"Sazanka" at Hotel Okura.
21:20 Arrived at Kantei residence.

SCHIEFFER